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Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
----------125847 281425Z /47
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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2301

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 5026

NODIS CHEROKEE

FROM LOW

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PDEV, RH
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: COMMENTS ON CURRENT ACTIVITIES

1. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS NO DOUBT AWARE, AS OF SATURDAY AUGUST 26, OWEN WAS PLANNING TO ATTEND THE KENYATTA FUNERAL AND DISCUSS RHODESIA THERE WITH NYERERE, KAUNDA, AND NKOMO. HE IS CONSIDERING ASKING THEM TO WORK WITH HIM TO FORMULATE A POSITION ON A SETTLEMENT WHICH HE WOULD TEN TAKE TO PRETORIA TO TRY TO SEEL TO THE SOUTH AFRICANS AND ULTIMATELY TO SMITH.

2. GRAHAM AND I HAVE RECOMMENDED AGAINST SUCH AN ATTEMPT. WE BELIEVE THAT INTERMEDIARY BARGAINING HAS BEEN TAKEN AS FAR AS IS POSSIBLE AT THIS STATE AND THAT ONLY THE PRINCIPALS SITTING DOWN TOGETHER WILL BE PREPARED TO MAKE THE FINAL CONCESSIONS NECESSARY TO REACH AN ACCOMMODATION. THE ONLY THING WHICH WE COULD GET OUT OF NAIROBI TALKS OF THE KIND OWEN SUGGESTS WOULD BE A MAXIMUM PATRIOTIC FRONT/FRONT LINE POSITION. THIS WOULD BE UNSALEABLE TO THE SOUTH AFRICANS AND RHODESIANS. FURTHERMORE, SMITH WOULD BE HIGHLY INCENSED BY ANY SUCH ATTEMPT TO USE THE SOUTH AFRICANS. HE RESENTS SOUTH AFRICAN DICTATION AND THE SAG IN TURN IS SENSITIVE ABOUT INTERFERING EXCEPT TO ENFORCE SOMETHING WHICH SMITH HAS ALREADY VOLUNTARILY ENTERED INTO. ONLY IN EXTREME
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CIRCUMSTANCES DO I BELIEVE, AND I THINK BILL EDMONDSON CONCURS, THAT VORSTER WOULD GO SO FAR AS TO INSIST ON SMITH'S ACCEPTANCE OF ANY FORMULA.

3. OWEN HAS THE IDEA THAT NYERERE IS INSISTING THAT SMITH PRESENT HIS PROPOSALS IN WRITING TO NKOMO AND MUGABE. THIS MAY BE CORRECT, BUT I DO NOT KNOW WHERE OWEN GOT IT. IT DOES NOT APPEAR

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IN THE MESSAGES FROM JIM SPAIN WHICH HAVE BEEN FORWARDED TO ME.
ANY SUCH IDEA, OF COURSE, WOULD COMPLETELY RULE OUT A SMITH MEETING
WITH NKOMO AND MUGABE, SINCE SMITH WOULD BE UNWILLING TO PUT
ANYTHING ON PAPER BEYOND THE MARCH 3 AGREEMENT. HE CLEARLY SEES A
PRELIMINARY MEETING WITH NKOMO AND MUGABE AS AN INFORMAL
DISCUSSION, AS HE SAYS, "TO SEE WHAT THEIR THINKING IS." THE
PROPOSAL, OF COURSE, IS DANGEROUS IN THE SENSE THAT IF THE PF
PRESENTS ITS MAXIMUM DEMANDS, IT COULD PROVIDE HIM WITH AN EXCUSE
TO BREAK OFF FURTHER TALKS AND SINK THE ALL PARTIES MEETING.
ONE COULD ARGUE, HOWEVER, THAT IF THIS IS SMITH'S INTENTION, HE
WILL DO IT SOONER OR LATER ANYWAY. A MEETING OF THE KIND WHICH
SMITH AND NKOMO APPARENTLY HAVE IN MIND DOES HAVE THE POSSIBILITY
OF PRODUCING SOMETHING USEFUL AS A PRELIMINARY TO AN ALL PARTIES
MEETING IF IT CAN BE KEPT (A) INFORMAL, (B) AS SMALL AND PRIVATE
AS POSSIBLE, AND (C) CONTINUES FOR A LONG ENOUGH TIME. THE MEETING
IN LUSAKA WAS UNSUCCESSFUL BECAUSE OF THE SIZE OF THE GROUP PRESENT
(ABOUT 12 PERSONS), AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH IT TOOK
PLACE (LATE IN THE EVENING AFTER A FULL DAY'S WORK AND A
TIRING FLIGHT, AND LASTING ONLY A LITTLE OVER THREE HOURS).

4. GRAHAM AND I FEAR THAT WITH THE INVOLVMENT NOW OF THE THREE
FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS AND NIGERIA, THE PATRIOTIC FRONT WILL BE
FORCED INTO A MUCH MORE RIGID POSITION. ON THE FACE OF IT, THERE
IS NOTHING WRONG WITH NYERERE'S INSISTANCE THAT NKOMO AND MUGABE
CONCERT THEIR POSITION BEFORE SEEING SMITH. WE ARE STILL
SKEPTICAL, HOWEVER, THAT MUGABE REALLY WANTS A MEETING AND,
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THEREFORE, CONCERTING WILL MEAN THAT NKOMO, IN ORDER TO GET MUGABE
TO ATTEND, WILL HAVE TO AGREE TO ACCEPT MORE EXTREME POSITIONS ON
THE SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS AT ISSUE. AS A RESULT, WE ARE SOMEWHAT
SKEPTICAL THAT A SECOND MEETING WILL EVER OCCUR. OUR FIRM
RECOMMENDATION, HOWEVER, IS THAT WE PROCEED NEVERTHELESS TO
AN ALL PARTIES MEETING.

5. I MYSELF BELIEVE THAT BEFORE THE PARTIES CAN BE BROUGHT TO
SUCH A MEETING, WE WILL HAVE TO BRING MORE PRESSURE THAN
WE HAVE TO DATE. SMITH IS TEMPTED BY HIS RIGHT WING TO BACK OUT
OF THE WHOLE AFFAIR. MUGABE IS CERTAINLY NOT ENTHUSIASTIC, AND
MUZOREWA IS FAR FROM CONVI CED YET. THERE MAY BE OTHER LEVERS
AVAILABLE TO US, BUT THE ONLY ONE THAT I SEE AT THE MOMENT IS
GOING PUBLIC WITH AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF A PLACE AND A DATE.
OWEN FOR GOOD REASONS DOES NOT WANT TO DO THIS AND JOHNNY
GRAHAM HAS STRONG RESERVATIONS. THEY POINT OUT THAT IT WOULD
INCREASE PRESSURE FROM THE PRESS ENORMOUSLY AND MIGHT INCLINE
THE PARTICIPANTS TO TAKE RIGID PUBLIC POSITIONS WHICH WOULD
MAKE A POSITIVE RESULT OF A MEETING SO MUCH MORE DIFFICULT.
CERTAINLY IF WE CAN AVOID TAKING THIS ROUTE, AND ORGANIZE A
CONFERENCE WITHOUT IT, WE WOULD BE BETTER OFF. BUT IT MAY COME
DOWN TO BEING THE ONLY WAY A MEETING IS POSSIBLE. THE

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PARTICIPANTS WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO REFUSE SUCH A CALL,
PRESSURE IS NOW SO HIGH. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, A REFUSAL
MIGHT BE PREFERABLE TO ALLOWING ANOTHER MONTH TO GO BY WITHOUT
A MEETING. THE DANGER, OF COURSE, IS THAT THEY MIGHT GO ONLY
TO WRECK IT. WE WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER CAREFULLY WHICH WAY
OUR INTERESTS LAY.
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